

Cover sheet:

For this assignment I will be submitting the following:

1. A 15-minute pre-recorded video presentation discussing poverty
2. An academic poster that could be used to support and develop theoretical concepts: - key concepts:
 - Health
 - Wellbeing
 - Lifestyle

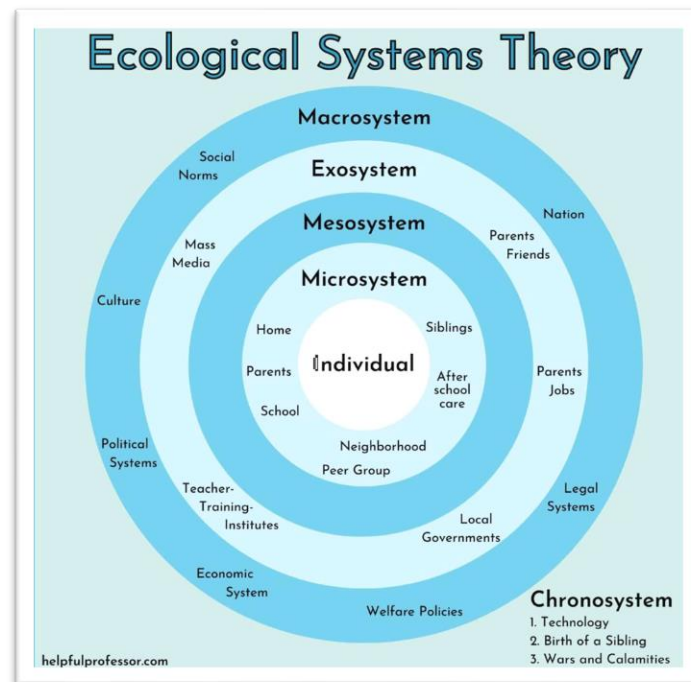
This academic poster will be looking at a range of theories and concepts in relation to health wellbeing and lifestyle with links to the early years, as well as ways in which early years practitioners can support children and families in achieving the best outcomes in youth leading to positive outcomes in adulthood.

Health

According to the World Health Organization (1946) health can be a broad concept to define, however they do explain it as a state of complete mental, physical social and emotional health, emphasising it is not just being free from any diseases. Musgrave (2017) states similar and describes health as being a result of all factors combined, these being social, emotional, physical, and intellectual. Whilst the world health organisation set the standard of health and life globally, organisations such as Harvard Health Publishing, (2024) explain being healthy as through lifestyle choices and nutrition as well as physical activity and maintaining sleep and stress levels. Focusing how to achieve a healthy life. Looking at all this information collectively it can be understood that although it is not straight forward to define health, all organisations seem to show similar understanding to describe what being healthy means, whether this being defining the word 'health' or further explaining what requires for it to be healthy.

When looking at health it is important to understand that it stems back all the way to the early years of life. As highlighted by Children in Wales (2026) looking health requires looking at lifestyle choices, these choices and habits are started within the early years. The early years are a crucial time because this is the period of rapid physical and mental development that can be influenced by a child's surroundings and the environment that they grow up in. From this, health is not just something that is established in adulthood but is something that is established in the early years and the influences of surroundings, families and professionals could impact this.

This links to Bronfenbrenner's ecological system theory regarding the environment helps shape the life of children and young people. As explained by webster (2025) the theory is explained as, children's development thrives in a series of relationships and not in insolation, and how these relationships are formed and interconnected systems. The closest layer, the microsystem, includes the child's immediate family and early years setting. This highlights exactly why early years practitioners are so important; by working closely with families (the mesosystem) and offering guidance on nutrition and sleep, practitioners help create a positive, healthy environment that directly supports the child's long-term wellbeing.



Chris Drew PHD (2024) *The 5 Levels of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory*. <https://helpfulprofessor.com/ecological-systems-theory-pros-cons/>

An example of communities providing support to families in the early years is the Flying Start initiative. Flying Start settings have been created to support young children and their families with having the best possible start. According to Newport city council (2026) the Flying Start programme offers an initiative as a community level to provide parenting advice, speech, and language support as well as quality childcare, encouraging healthy lifestyle advice and supporting overall wellbeing for children. Flying start claim to have quality practitioners to deliver high quality childcare every day.

However, research published by Senedd Research (2023) indicates that not all children in Wales are entitled to accessing the Flying Start programme. Families that are outside of the designated area codes are not entitled to this meaning that around two thirds of people are living in poverty and missing out of the benefits that could improve health outcomes. Although outreach programmes have been created to combat this issue, unfortunately funding to support this has been limited and not as successful as hoped. That being said, Welsh Government (2026) have recently released a statement explaining how the city of Newport is the first in Wales to offer Flying start childcare too every two-year-old, expanding the scheme to meet the needs of all 2 year olds where they be in catchment areas or not. This positive step forward ensures all two years olds can access structured environments, routines to support their health and lifestyle.

Wellbeing

Understanding what wellbeing means, can be a difficult concept to explain. However, (Mental Health Foundation, 2021) states that a child's wellbeing is made up of emotional, psychological, and social dimensions. They explain wellbeing to be multi-dimensional and believes that children need to establish healthy relationships with others and the environment in which they occupy. Stating that children wellbeing is not only focusing on the positive emotion, but a combination of it all. Similarly, this links into the routines established at an early age as it describes predictable lifestyles as being a support to psychological stability and children gaining confidence in social situations and how these work simultaneously.

The connections between routines and the benefits of emotional stability can also be linked to the theory of attachment. Bowlby (1982) suggests that children in the early years need to develop secure attachments and build positive relationships with familiar staff to ensure a secure base. During the period of building this attachment, children recognise that they are having their needs met consistently by a familiar adult, they then build the confidence to go off and explore and keep coming back to ensure they still have that familiarity. Once this secure base is established, children are more likely to explore the environment and grow in confidence, building self-esteem and self-worth.

However, according to Department for Education (2024) there is a high turnover of staff within the early years sector in the United Kingdom, which disrupts the consistency of care and attention that early year's sectors promise to children.

Without this quality of care and lack of stability it is likely that secure attachments will struggle to form. Newly recruited staff will not be aware of the needs of the children; children's needs are likely to be missed as there is unfamiliarity between practitioners and children. Without the formation of a secure base children are likely to find it difficult to explore confidently and in turn develop healthy habits which support them throughout their lives.

Without forming secure attachments, it is possible children

Having a set routine with predictability will help to reinforce this sense of security. Early years settings that have established routines for toothbrushing and snack time help to reinforce stability for the children, leading to a boost in wellbeing and self-esteem. Consistent care and predictability of familiar practitioners provide a solid foundation for this. It is important to recognise that attachments are not just necessary for dealing with emotions in the moment, but they should be strong enough to for a child to build resilience and use this to engage in the environment confidently without fear and anxieties. (GPIFN, 2020)



John Bowlby(The Bowlby Centre,2026)

The link between building strong, secure relationships and predictable routines are embedded within the Welsh education policy. Within the Curriculum for Wales framework (Welsh Government, 2022) health and wellbeing is recognised as core area of learning and development, emotional stability is recognised as its own area of importance. Throughout the frameworks wellbeing is discussed, however everyday routines and experiences such as snack time, toilet training and snack time are seen as being vital learning points for children, providing them with time to process the secure environment throughout the experiences. Even though there seems to be challenges with staff turnover, maintaining consistent routines remains a priority for practitioners in Wales. Settings such as Flying Start provisions continue to aim to deliver the curriculum and work to ensure that children are achieving their potential and establish emotional resilience allowing them to engage fully with the world around them.

Lifestyle

The way a family's lifestyle influences a child's health can be understood through the concept of 'relational health.' According to Frosch, Schoppe-Sullivan, and O'Banion (2021) early childhood behaviours are shaped by bonds created in the early years of life between children and caregivers and parents. These behaviours then go on to highlight everyday lifestyle outcomes such as nutrition and oral health. Research such as this supports the Flying Start initiative as it allows early years practitioners the opportunity to encourage healthier lifestyles through offering support and guidance with toothbrushing, healthy eating as well as other habits that affect children and impact their future lifestyles.

Programmes such as Design to Smile offer opportunities for improved dental outcomes in children, the programme is designed to reduce inadequacies between children in deprived areas. Children are encouraged to brush teeth within early years settings, with practitioners providing a daily routine and distributing fluoride toothpaste and brushes to continue this in the home environment. These initiatives are designed to establish strong, healthy routines within the early years of a child's life and prevent future health problems in adults. (Welsh Government 2017)

The importance of this has been highlighted within data from Public Health Network Cymru (2026), who argue that within recent years tooth decay in children is starting to decline. However, they do recognise that there are still a great deal of children suffering from health inequalities and how this initiative is still very much needed within the early years.

This indicates that the early years practitioners are valuable in supporting an initiative that is displaying positive outcomes for children and families in need.

This is supported by Mindell and Williamson (2018) who have discovered that having consistent nighttime routines with children not only improve the quality of sleep, but it also has a positive effect on emotional and cognitive development as well as a relationships and bonding time between children and parents or carers. Mindell and Williamson (2018) continue to explain how maintaining routines incorporate many health benefits, such as nutrition with a healthy bedtime snack and oral health with a consistent tooth brushing routine supported by parents before sleeping. These lifestyle routines provide a positive impact on the lives of children and young people. This evidence supports Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust (2025) that has been previously discussed.

The links between consistent routines and the emotional wellbeing of children link in with Maslow's pyramid of hierarchy of needs. The pyramid suggests that physiological needs need to be met for them to have the opportunity and accomplish higher levels that are safety, belonging and love, esteem needs, and self-actualisation. (Maslow, 1943) Nutrition and sleep alongside safety are essential for children to reach self-actualisation. Early years practitioners and parents collaborating holistically to establish these positive routines provide children with the foundations to thrive and live positive and secure lifestyles.

To conclude, this poster highlights that health, wellbeing and lifestyle are all interconnected and established within the early years of a child life.

As it has been discussed, through the concepts of BronfenBrenner, Maslow and Bowlby, young children depend entirely on the secure attachments of familiar adults and the predictability of routines to build up emotional resilience and establish foundations for adulthood.

Early years initiatives in place to support children and families can provide solid foundations for children to learn and build on throughout their lives, such as the Design to smile programme and the rollout of Flying Start. This does not come without its complications and inconsistencies. The lack of a rigid workforce which is important for establishing strong connections between children and key workers as well as the impact of the postcode lottery enabling children and families to access the services on offer. However, Welsh framework prioritises holistic wellbeing and continues to work to offer all children consistent care through a supportive key worker practitioner.

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